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	CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY  Approved by: _____ Signature of Agency Director	PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS See Section VIII.
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 22, 2004	LATEST REVISION: July 21, 2004	REVIEW BY LEGAL COUNSEL: Yes

I. AUTHORITY	The Director of the Child and Family Services Agency adopts this policy to be consistent with the Agency's mission and applicable federal and District of Columbia laws, rules and regulations, including, but not limited to, provisions in Title 4 of the D.C. Code, Chapter 60 of Title 29 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations, and the modified final order and implementation plan in <i>LaShawn A. v. Williams</i> .
II. APPLICABILITY	All Intake and Investigations, In-Home and Reunification, Permanency and Family Resources, and Office of Youth Development staff and contracted agency personnel.
III. RATIONALE	<p>The mission of the Child and Family Services Agency is to promote the safety, permanence, and well being of children and families in the District of Columbia. This mission can best be achieved if Agency and contracted agency personnel ensure frequent, purposeful visitation between social workers and children, between social workers and parents, and between children and their families.</p> <p>Social workers are in a position to make informed decisions about the safety, permanence, and well being of children when they visit children frequently and conduct thorough assessments of children's needs, the extent to which their needs are being met, and their progress toward permanence. Through frequent, purposeful visits with parents, social workers can engage families in advancing case plans, adequately communicate expectations, and monitor progress toward goals. Children and families should have frequent visits with social workers to get needed services and supports for improving their outcomes.</p> <p>Visitation with parents, siblings, and other kin is a child's right, not a privilege or something to be earned or denied based on behavior of the child or the parent. While the maintenance of familial connections is always important for children, it is particularly important for children with the goal of reunification. Reunification can best occur when the familial tie is maintained through children, siblings, and parents visiting frequently.</p>
IV. POLICY	It is the policy of the Child and Family Services Agency, as well as its contracted agencies, to ensure frequent visitation between social workers and children and families who have substantiated cases of abuse or neglect. The Agency and contracted agencies also shall facilitate frequent visitation between children and their parents, siblings, and kin. Social workers shall document all visits in FACES within 24 hours of each visit.

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VI. ATTACHMENTS	
VII. PROCEDURES	<p>Procedure A: Social Worker Visits with Families Receiving In-Home Services</p> <p>Social worker visits with families receiving in-home services are central to agency efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect and strengthen families. Workers can best adequately assess a child's safety and a family's stability through frequent visitation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An Agency or contracted agency social worker or a qualified worker from a service provider authorized by the Agency shall visit in the home frequently, with a goal of visiting twice a month and at a minimum once per month, families for which abuse or neglect is substantiated and a determination has been made that children can be maintained safely in the home with services. The needs of the child and family shall determine the frequency of additional visits. 2. Every visit with a family receiving in-home services shall include a private visit with the child for whom abuse or neglect is substantiated outside the presence of adult family members except in those cases where the child is less than eighteen months of age. 3. Unannounced visits are permissible and the likelihood of such visits should be explained to families. 4. During each visit with families receiving in-home services, the social worker shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess the safety of the children in the home; b. Ensure that the needs of all of the children in the home are being met; and c. Assess progress on the family's case plan and initiate updates through discussions with the parent(s). 5. The social worker shall record in FACES the following information about every visit within 24 hours of the visit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The date of the visit with the family; b. The location of the visit; c. The persons present for the visit; d. The purpose of the visit; e. The content of the visit, including the content of the visit with the child outside the presence of adult family members; and f. The family's progress since the previous visit.

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Procedure B: Social Worker Visits with Children in Out-of-Home Care

Children in out-of-home care should have frequent visits from their social workers regardless of the type of placement in which they live. Frequent visitation to children in out-of-home care enables social workers to assess and monitor continuously children's safety, progress toward permanency, and well being.

1. During the first eight weeks after a child is placed in out-of-home care or moved to a new placement, the social worker shall visit the child in the placement frequently to assure the child's adjustment to the placement and should visit no less frequently than once a week.
2. Thereafter, the worker shall continue to visit frequently and should visit at a minimum of once every two weeks. These visits shall be scheduled with input from caretakers whenever possible.
3. Each visit shall include a private visit with the child outside the presence of the resource parents or facility staff except in those cases where the child is less than eighteen months of age.
4. Children placed less than 100 miles outside of the District of Columbia shall receive visitation according to the same requirements as children placed within the District of Columbia.
5. If the child is placed more than 100 miles outside of the District of Columbia, a social worker from the receiving state shall supervise the placement through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. The child's social worker from the Agency or contracted agency shall monitor the placement with monthly telephone calls to the social worker from the receiving state, when possible, monthly telephone calls to the child, when he or she has a relationship with the child, and visits with the child face-to-face at least twice per year.
6. During each visit with a child in out-of-home care, the social worker shall:
 - a. Assess the child's safety;
 - b. Ensure the child's needs are being met;
 - c. Assess progress on the child's case plan and initiate updates;
 - d. Inform the child of upcoming events; and
 - e. Address the child's concerns, including issues of separation and loss as well as any other issues.
7. The social worker shall record in FACES the following information about every visit within 24 hours of the visit:
 - a. The date of the visit between the child and the child's worker(s);
 - b. The location of the visit;
 - c. The persons present for the visit;
 - d. The purpose of the visit; and

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	e. The content of the visit, including the content of the visit with the child outside the presence of the resource parents or facility staff.
	<p>Procedure C: Social Worker Visits with Parents of Children in Out-of-Home Care</p> <p>When a child's goal is reunification, parents should have frequent visitation and efforts from the social worker to involve the parents in the case planning process and to facilitate achievement of the goal.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> For children with a goal of reunification, the social worker shall visit and work with the child's parent(s) in the home as often as is necessary to facilitate the child's return home. In every case the worker shall meet with the child's parent(s) no less frequently than twice a month in the first three months post-placement unless there is documentation that the parent(s) is (are) unavailable or refuse to cooperate with the Agency or contracted agency. After three months, the worker shall continue to work with the child's parent(s) as often as is necessary to facilitate reunification, but with a minimum of once a month for as long as the goal is reunification, unless there is documentation that the parent(s) is (are) unavailable or refuse to cooperate with the Agency or contracted agency. Engaging the parents, the social worker shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure continued progress on the child and family plan; Assist the parent in attaining needed resources; Affirm progress and address concerns; Discuss the family and child's separation and loss issues; Examine other issues related to the delivery of services to identify and remove or reduce barriers to the attainment of those services; and Discuss any medical, dental, or mental health needs or appointments for the child. The social worker shall record in FACES the following information about every visit within 24 hours of the visit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The date of the visit; The location of the visit; The persons present for the visit; The purpose of the visit; The content of the visit; and The parents' progress since the previous visit.
	<p>Procedure D: Visitation Between Children in Out-of-Home Care and Their Families</p> <p>Children in out-of-home care should have frequent visits with their parents, siblings, and other kin unless the Court determines that it is not in the best interest of the child to have visitation. Maintaining these family relationships</p>

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	<p>can provide a sense of stability to children who have been removed from their homes. Visits with kin also promote children's safety and well being, as well as permanency, whether kin are becoming permanency resources themselves or are able to provide support to permanency resources.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agency and contracted agency social workers shall assure that all children with a permanency goal of reunification are permitted to visit with their parents at least once a week, unless the best interest of the child, specifically documented in the child's case plan, requires less frequent visitation. Social workers shall make intensive efforts to engage the parent in continuing contacts with the child. 2. For children whose goal is not reunification, the social worker shall make an individualized assessment of the child and his or her circumstances in order to determine whether visitation should be limited or denied in the best interests of the child. If the worker identifies a compelling reason for why visitation should be limited or denied, the worker shall present a recommendation, that shall be well-supported by evidence, to the Court. If the Court makes a decision that the social worker believes is contrary to the best interests of the child, including safety, permanence, and well being, the social worker shall raise the issue to his or her supervisor and to the appropriate Agency legal staff. If there is not a compelling reason in the best interests of the child to limit or deny visitation, then the Agency and contracted agencies shall assure visitation between a child and his or her parents, regardless of the type of placement or permanency goal. If appropriate, workers may encourage continued visitation once permanency is achieved. 3. The social worker shall assure that children are permitted to visit with incarcerated parents, unless the social worker determines, through an individualized assessment of the child and his or her circumstances, that visitation should be limited or denied. If the worker identifies compelling reasons for why visitation should be limited or denied, the worker shall present a recommendation, that is well-supported by evidence, to the Court. If the Court makes a decision that the social worker believes is contrary to the best interests of the child, including safety, permanence, and well being, the social worker shall raise the issue to his or her supervisor and the appropriate Agency legal staff. 4. Social workers shall facilitate visitation between siblings placed apart. Children placed apart from their siblings shall have at least twice monthly visitation with some or all of their siblings. 5. Social workers shall assure that all visitations between children and their parents and siblings take place in the parent's home unless there are reasons documented in the record. In all instances, visits shall take place in the most family-like setting possible. Social workers may contact the Healthy Families/Thriving Communities Collaboratives to assist with establishing visitation in family-like settings. 6. Individualized visitation plans with parents and siblings shall be created by the worker with input from the family team and outlined in both the child and family plans. Social workers shall assist in making specific
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	<p>arrangements between the parents and out-of-home caregivers, with consultation by the family team, including suggesting dates, times, and individuals responsible to transport and attend.</p> <p>7. The social worker shall communicate the resource parent's responsibility to assist in maintaining and improving the child's relationship with her or his family, and support this relationship by helping with family visits, which, with the resource parent's input, may include visits in the resource parent's home.</p> <p>8. If clinically contraindicated for the child's safety or best interests, the Agency may request that the court deny or limit visitation with specific individuals. Visitation and other forms of communication with family shall be denied when ordered by the court. Visits may be limited by having them supervised by social workers, resource parents, or other qualified individuals. Social workers shall make a well-supported recommendation on visits to the Court. The Court shall then determine the level of visits and who is to supervise them. If the Court makes a decision that the social worker believes is contrary to the best interests of the child, including safety, permanence, and well being, the social worker shall raise the issue to his or her supervisor and the appropriate Agency legal staff.</p> <p>9. A child who is placed more than 100 miles outside of the District of Columbia in out-of-home care may travel home at the Agency's or contracted agency's expense, as frequently as is deemed appropriate through an individualized assessment of the child and her or his circumstances. If the parent has moved out of the District and the permanency goal is to return the child to the parent, the child may also travel to visit the parent, as frequently as is deemed appropriate through an individualized assessment of the child and her or his circumstances, at the Agency's or contracted agency's expense if the parent cannot afford to purchase the necessary tickets.</p> <p>10. Between visits, social workers shall encourage children and families to maintain contact through telephone calls and written communication. Kin or out-of-home caregivers may only censor or monitor a child's mail or phone calls to and from family by court order.</p> <p>11. The social worker shall record in FACES the following information about every visit the child has with the mother, father, siblings, and other kin within 24 hours of the visit:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The date of the visit; The location of the visit; The persons present for the visit; The purpose of the visit; and The content of the visit.
VIII. Professional Standards	

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